



NEWS

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This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action.
See MCI v. FCC, 515 F 2d 385 (D.C. Circ 1974).

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AT&T TO PAY \$18.25 MILLION TO SETTLE FCC INVESTIGATION OF IMPROPERLY BILLING FUND THAT SUPPORTS ACCESSIBILITY OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICES TO PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Consent Decree Includes Compliance Plan to Prevent Future Violations

Washington, D.C. – AT&T Inc. has agreed to pay \$18.25 million to settle an investigation by the FCC's Enforcement Bureau into whether the company improperly billed the Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS) fund for certain IP Relay (Internet-based TRS) calls. Among the issues under investigation were whether AT&T billed the fund for IP Relay calls by persons whom the company registered for the service without first requiring them to provide such basic information as their names, and by persons whose registration information the company failed to adequately verify. These registration and verification requirements are designed to protect the program against waste, fraud and abuse.

In the consent decree released today, AT&T agreed to reimburse the TRS Fund \$7 million, which includes interest. In addition, AT&T agreed to make a voluntary contribution of \$11.25 million to the U.S. Treasury. AT&T must implement a robust compliance plan including new operating procedures, comprehensive training of its employees and contractors, and periodic reporting requirements.

FCC Chairman Julius Genachowski said, "For consumers with speech and hearing disabilities, Telecommunications Relay Service provides a vital connection to friends, family, employers and first responders. Today's settlement represents the fourth FCC enforcement action to date against Internet-based TRS providers, resulting in payments of nearly \$40 million back to the Fund and the U.S. Treasury. The steps taken today will not only ensure the integrity of the program, but also send a strong signal to providers that we will not tolerate abuse of the system."

FCC Enforcement Bureau Chief Michele Ellison added, "The Enforcement Bureau will remain vigilant in this area. Millions of people rely on Telecommunications Relay Service, and we intend to safeguard it for their use. We will continue to root out waste in the TRS program and strongly urge TRS providers to put processes and procedures in place to prevent violations of the Commission's TRS rules."

TRS enables an individual who is deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind, or who has a speech disability, to engage in telephone communications with one or more individuals. With IP Relay, a Internet-based form of TRS, a person with a hearing or speech disability communicates with a provider's communications assistant (CA) via an Internet connection, and the CA relays the communications to the hearing party via the public switched telephone network (PSTN).

The TRS Fund compensates TRS providers for reasonable costs of providing service for interstate calls. TRS is funded from a fee paid for by subscribers of interstate telecommunications services. Congress created the TRS program in Title IV of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, codified at Section 225 of the Communications Act of 1934, as amended (Act). Under the Act, the Commission must ensure the provision of TRS that is functionally equivalent to voice telephone service. The Commission's TRS regulations set forth mandatory minimum standards that TRS providers must follow to meet this functional equivalency mandate.

The consent decree is available at http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DA-13-594A1.pdf.

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on the Commission's web site www.fcc.gov.